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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAHORE 000072

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TAGS: PTER PREL PGOV PK

SUBJECT: PUNJAB GOVERNOR TASEER TELLS CODEL KYL THAT EXTREMISM IS LIMITED TO SMALL MINORITY

CLASSIFIED BY: Matthew D. Lowe, Acting Principal Officer, Consulate Lahore, U.S. Department of State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. Summary (C) Punjab Governor Salman Taseer told a congressional delegation led by Senator Jon Kyl that only a small minority in Pakistan supports extremism. He highlighted assistance to Pakistan's education system as the best way to counter terrorist recruitment. Taseer also envisioned Pakistan as a moderate, progressive role model to other Muslim countries.

Senator Kyl stressed that the U.S. will remain engaged in Pakistan, and that President Obama's strategy has earned bipartisan support. End Summary.

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Security in Punjab Worrisome  
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¶2. (C) In an April 8 meeting with Punjab Governor Salman Taseer, Senator Jon Kyl expressed concern over the security situation in Pakistan, particularly in Punjab in light of recent attack on the Manawan Training Center. Kyl commended Taseer for his willingness to speak against extremism and support for the federal government's initiative to create a counter-terrorism security force. Governor Taseer insisted that the majority in Punjab, as well as Pakistan, do not support extremist elements, as shown by the overwhelming local support for the police after the attack at the Manawan training center. However, he acknowledged, "only 5 or 6 madmen can disrupt a population." The counter-terrorism security force, he explained, would recruit people from the border regions as they can speak Pashto and can be used to fight extremists throughout the country.

¶3. (C) Governor Taseer related that, in addition to the impact on safety, terrorist incidents also result in a loss of foreign investment. The proposed Kerry-Lugar legislation would equal less than the cost that terrorism has had on Pakistani businesses, he surmised. Representative Jane Harman observed that this lack of investment may not be entirely the result of the security situation but might also be the result of the global economic downturn.

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Sri Lankan Attack Culprits Unidentified  
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¶4. (C) Representative Harman inquired if the police have identified the perpetrators of the attack on the Sri Lankan Cricket team in Lahore. Taseer responded the investigation remains open, but he blamed "sub-educated," religious extremists that want to embarrass the country on the world stage. "They are

filled with animalistic hysteria that no one understands," Taseer lamented. Essentially, he said, a terrorist organization bought five or six "hit men" for USD 250,000. He pointed out that the attackers had rocket-propelled grenade launchers, but did not know how to fire them, which implied poor training. "They were shooting as if on a Sunday picnic," he recounted.

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Education Key to Fighting Terrorism  
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¶ 15. (C) Senator Kyl observed that Saudi-funded madrassas have served to recruit new terrorists and asked Governor Taseer if he viewed these groups as a serious threat. In a recent conversation with Ambassador Holbrooke, Taseer stated, he had stressed that education is the "first soft target" in the fight against extremists. Taseer detailed that Pakistan has only two options for those who want an education: "elite" private institutions or failed state-run schools. As a result, he continued, madrassas become the only alternative available to parents who care about education but too poor for private school. Moreover, madrassas, most of which espouse moderate philosophies, provide room, board and quality religious education for students, he noted. He recommended that the U.S. invest in education in Pakistan on all levels. "Any money that seeps in creates a good impact," he suggested.

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Pakistan's Democracy Could Be "Role Model" for Muslim World  
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¶ 16. (C) Senator Kyl asked Governor Taseer what message he would like to send to the Senate and the people of the United States. Taseer reiterated that Pakistan has a functioning, "robust, raucous," democratically elected government without military

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interference. Representative Chris Carney questioned whether the army will permanently remain out of politics. Taseer stated that a "rough and tumble democracy" is better than having military involved. In addition to Turkey, he proposed, Pakistan could serve as an example of a democratic Muslim country and a "role model" for the Muslim World. He asked the U.S. to support democracy, education and remove trade barriers.

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Media Perception of Pakistan in U.S.  
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¶ 17. (C) Representative John Kline said that the U.S. media conveys the impression that most Pakistanis support the militants and asked Taseer how Pakistan can improve its global image. Taseer underlined that "99 percent of Pakistan" stands against extremism. Even in Swat, he explained, the population dislikes the mullahs intensely, "but what can they do against a couple hundred people with guns?" Taseer added that although the missile strikes cause very little collateral damage, Pakistanis believe that they cause hundreds of civilian casualties, which leads to resentment and a belief that the U.S. has targeted Muslims.

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Fix the Afghanistan Border  
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¶ 18. (C) Senator Jeff Sessions stated that Pakistan cannot allow Afghanistan to deteriorate and urged that Pakistan improve the monitoring of its border. Taseer responded that everyone must work together within the region to stabilize Afghanistan and the solution must come from within Afghanistan. He pointed out that there are 170 million Muslims in India that also "feel deprived" and mistreated. If Indian Muslims also "erupted," Taseer speculated, Pakistan would face crises on both borders and the extremist movement could sweep across the continent.

¶ 19. (C) At the conclusion of the meeting, Senator Kyl stated that

the U.S. interest in Pakistan is longstanding, as shown by the new Obama strategy, which reinforces the U.S. desire to maintain a strong relationship with Pakistan. Senator Kyl reassured Taseer that the U.S. is in this for the "long haul" and will not abandon Pakistan after it achieves its strategic objectives. Taseer agreed that as a nuclear power with the largest Muslim army in the world, Pakistan must be on the U.S. screen.

¶10. (C) Meeting participants:

Pakistan

-- Governor Salman Taseer

U.S.

-- Senator John Kyl

-- Senator Jeff Sessions

-- Representative Jane Harman

-- Representative John Kline

-- Representative Chris Carney

-- Tim Morrison, National Security Policy Advisor to Senator Kyl

-- Jennifer Stewart, National Security Advisor to Rep. Boehner

-- Sandy Luff, Military Legislative Advisor to Senator Sessions

-- CDR C.J. Cassidy, Navy Senate Liaison

-- Lt. Natalie Schultz, Navy Senate Liaison

-- Deputy Chief of Mission Jerry Feierstein

-- Acting Principal Officer Matthew Lowe

-- Political Officer Stephanie Hackenburg, notetaker

¶11. (SBU) This cable was drafted after Codel Kyl departed post.

LOWE